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INR/IAA (BEN-YEHUDA)

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: HAITI REGISTRATION: WELCOME SUCCESS STORY

¶1. Summary: According to OAS officials, 3,105,000 voters had registered as of October 10. They project roughly 3.2 million will have registered by October 15. The registration site in Cite Soleil, opened on October 5, is operating smoothly and registering between 300-400 voters per day. ID cards continue to arrive in Haiti, but the lack of distribution sites and additional quality control checks are slowing distribution. OAS staff hope that voting centers will shortly open nationwide to serve as distribution points, as originally planned. Though long-delayed and slower than anticipated, registration can be classed as a major success. Post will press the IGOH and political actors to build on the success of the electoral effort to create momentum for the campaign, and to continue to pressure Haitian elections officials to ensure timely elections. End Summary.

¶2. OAS elections chief Elizabeth Spehar told Poloff that 3,105,000 voters had registered as of October 10 and reiterated her belief that at least 3.2 million voters would be registered by October 15, the final deadline for registration. Spehar's estimate takes into account incomplete reporting from remote areas due to bad weather. Nationwide, registration averaged 10,000 per day between September 30 and October 10, down from roughly 42,000 per day in the last week of September. According to MINUSTAH elections officials, registration at the new site in volatile Cite Soleil continues without disruption. Since opening on October 5, between 300-400 people have registered daily on the site's six computers. MINUSTAH reports no problems with violence or fraud, and plans to begin basing assistance programs such as food distribution and trash pickup at the site.

¶3. The OAS has received roughly 500,000 ID cards, and started card distribution in Port-au-Prince on a small scale. Registered voters line up daily where cards are available based on word-of-mouth news. The OAS still plans to distribute the bulk of ID cards through voting centers so that voters know the location of their voting center before election day. In order to begin distribution in urban areas, the OAS has informally designated some urban registration sites as voting centers even though the CEP has not officially chosen the voting centers.

¶4. Comment: With the successful operation of the Cite Soleil centers and targeted efforts to reach rural voters, the registration effort has succeeded, both in terms of numbers and fair and equal access to voter registration centers. Though carried out far more slowly and with more difficulty than anticipated, the effort ultimately succeeded because of cooperation and flexibility between the CEP and the OAS. OAS experts were proactive, actively challenging the CEP into action. The CEP member responsible for registration, Pierre-Richard Duchemin worked well with the OAS and frequently presented his CEP colleagues with faits accompli. If elections are to occur on time, Haitian and MINUSTAH elections officials must adopt this model in some form. The success of the Cite Soleil registration center also bodes well for the prospect of orderly elections. MINUSTAH officials negotiated directly with community leaders (most avowed Aristide supporters) who pressed for access to the registration process, guaranteed the safety of registration workers and registrants, and encouraged their partisans to register.

CARNEY